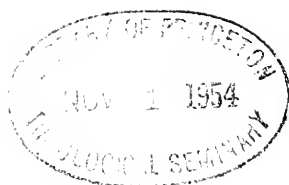


W. Robertson Smith

Speech.

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Speech delivered at a
special meeting of the

*COMMISSION OF FREE CHURCH ASSEMBLY,
27th OCTOBER 1880.*

S P E E C H

BY

PROFESSOR W. ROBERTSON SMITH.

Edinburgh:

MACNIVEN & WALLACE.

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DELIVERED AT A

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF
ASSEMBLY OF THE FREE CHURCH,
ON 27TH OCTOBER 1880.

BY

PROFESSOR W. ROBERTSON SMITH. ✓

TO WHICH ARE APPENDED

REPORT OF COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY THE COMMISSION IN
AUGUST TO EXAMINE THE WRITINGS OF PROFESSOR SMITH,

AND

REASONS OF DISSENT FROM THAT REPORT GIVEN IN BY
PROFESSOR LINDSAY AND OTHERS.

EDINBURGH: MACNIVEN & WALLACE.

SPEECH BY PROFESSOR ROBERTSON SMITH.

PROFESSOR SMITH SPEAKS UNDER PROTEST.

I HAVE already expressed, in what seemed to me to be the most regular and orderly fashion, by a letter addressed to the clerk of Commission, to be communicated to the Commission upon the subject, my reasons for believing that the proceedings in virtue of which I stand here to-day are irregular proceedings, and proceedings which the Church will not, in the long run, be able to stand to. I have already explained that I stand here under protest. I consider that it is an injury to myself personally, and, what is a far greater matter, an injury to the Church, that any question affecting personal interests should be brought up in the way in which this question has been. Nor do I think, even upon the analogy argued by Sir Henry Moncreiff,—which, I observed was an analogy of parties summoned to a court undoubtedly judicial,—even on that analogy, which largely begs the question, because it commits us to hold the Commission to be actually a judicial body, with power of summons—even on that analogy, I am not able to see that the position which the House has now called upon me to take up is one that can be defended. In the civil courts, when parties are called to answer for their own interests, it is certainly contrary to what I know of law (which, I admit, is not much), and it is also contrary to what I can learn from the experience of those who know more of law, to suppose that in such a case citation of a party for his own interest means that the party so called is to speak and exhaust his case before the questions have been opened up by the main agents in the suit (hear, hear). According to Sir Henry Moncreiff's remarks, and according, apparently, to the view of the committee, as explained by Mr Macphail, I am regarded as being in this case interested only in a secondary degree. I am not the party at the bar in the sense of being the person directly attacked, and yet I am asked to make my defence from the bar exactly in the same way as if I had a formal indictment before me, with full notice not merely in general of the kind of accusation to be brought against me, but of the whole matter, the whole papers in the case, and everything upon which the argument could proceed. Under these circumstances, Moderator, I wish to say that I speak only under protest, and I do so simply for this reason, that I think it better that, so far as I am able, even in my unprepared state, I should say something upon this report and this proposal, than that I should allow

the Commission to go on without using every opportunity, however irregular, which is given to me, to endeavour to avert what I believe would be not merely an injustice to an individual—for on that point I am unwilling to dwell at any length—but also an injury and an injustice to the whole Church. (Applause.)

CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DEFENCE.

Before I begin, I wish the House to understand exactly how I am circumstanced. The report of the committee, which I am now called on to speak to, was put into my hands for the first time as I entered this room at eleven o'clock this morning. It has already been intimated, in the way of dissent, that a proposal was made in the committee to give me the opportunity there of knowing what was charged against me, but this opportunity was refused. What I have before me is simply a somewhat long and elaborate report of the committee, which was put into my hands as I entered the House this morning. In fairness, I ought to say that I saw the dissents last night. That is the extent of my preparation on the subject. Since I entered, the House has been engaged in a somewhat vigorous discussion, and it has not been possible for me to be so abstracted as to consider the report; nor was it possible for me to leave the building after what Sir Henry Moncreiff had said, when I did not know at what stage it might be necessary for me to appear to watch over my own interests. In addition to the report of the committee—the report having been previously kept exceedingly private—I have now heard notice of a motion to which also, I understand, I am expected to reply. Dr Wilson's motion is one of considerable length, and as I have not been able wholly to follow it, I wish to understand before I proceed further, whether it would be considered a reasonable thing that I might now be furnished with a copy. (Laughter.)

Dr WILSON—I don't see any possible objection to that.

Professor SMITH—I did not suppose that Dr Wilson would have any objection. (Laughter.) The motion was then handed to the Professor, who, continuing, said—I have now before me two documents, one affecting a very large range of theological questions so far as this Commission has any control over them (which I venture to think, according to the constitution of the Church, is not very far); the other affecting one of my most sacred privileges as an office-bearer of this Church, namely the right to exercise my office; for, although it is not proposed to take away my status or salary, yet it is proposed to take away the one thing which, to any conscientious office-bearer, makes office valuable,—the opportunity of exercising that office in the service of Christ. (Applause.) The first of these documents I received at eleven o'clock; the second has just been put into my hands; and this is supposed to be consistent with the orderliness which becomes the Church of Christ; it is supposed to be consistent with the feelings of justice and Christian charity that belong to the Christian Church. (Applause.) Under these circumstances I must request the indulgence of the Commission if they will allow me to read Dr Wilson's motion again, as the only means, without an interruption of the business of the House, of knowing what I am to speak to.

THE PROPOSAL TO APPROVE THE REPORT *GENERALLY*.

Professor SMITH then read the motion,* after which he said : Here the first point in which I am interested is that Dr Wilson proposes that the report of the committee be generally approved of. That expression is, however, exceedingly vague. The report of the committee appears to be written in paragraphs ; it appears to be carefully articulated, so that it would be quite within the power of the Commission—supposing that they really were sufficiently advised in this case to go into the report at all—it would be quite possible for the Commission to articulate their approval, and state what paragraphs were approved of, and what not approved of, so that a tangible result might be obtained. But, so far as I have observed, Dr Wilson has not proposed to do that ; and although the individual sections of this report are of great importance to me as well as others, all that is asked is that it should be generally approved of. What, I ask, is involved in such a general approval ? It would have been a very great assistance to me if I had had Dr Wilson's own explanation of that before being called upon to speak, but that is not to be ; therefore I think the only guide that I now have to the nature of the general approval proposed, is contained in the following clause of the motion, where the Commission are asked to declare that certain writings of mine “have created serious alarm and uneasiness in the Church, as being fitted to produce upon readers the impression that Scripture does not present a reliable statement of truth, and that God is not the author of it.” That, I take it, is the very least to which the Commission are asked to commit themselves by approving of this motion, for I find something almost identical with that in the early pages of the report :—“The committee do not impute to Professor R. Smith the intention of assailing the integrity and authority of Scripture in the writings they have examined, but the statements made by him in many particulars are such as are fitted, and can hardly fail, to produce upon the minds of readers the impression that Scripture does not present a reliable statement of truth, and that God is not the author of it.” Very well, we may take it that so much of the report being repeated in the motion, the Commission are asked to commit themselves to this, that in the writings which I have published since last General Assembly there

* “The Commission receive the report of the committee, and approve of it generally ; and considering that the Commission is instructed to advert to the interests of the Church on every occasion, that the Church do not suffer or sustain any prejudice which they can prevent ; considering also that the various writings of Professor Robertson Smith, adverted to in the report, which have created serious alarm and uneasiness in the Church, as being fitted to produce upon readers the impression that the Bible does not present a reliable statement of the truth of God, and that God is not the author of it, have been published since last Assembly, and were not in view of the Assembly ; considering that these writings were prepared for publication at a time when their author had accepted service of a libel found relevant, charging him with cognate views ; and considering, further, that the Church must sustain serious injury if she can be regarded as giving any sanction to, or as concurring in, the views expressed in these writings, declare that the Commission, as representing the Free Church, and as charged with conserving its interests, cannot but protest against the Church being implicated in the promulgation of them, and resolve to transmit the report of their committee to the General Assembly, that they may take such action in the matter as to them may seem meet. Further, in view of the whole circumstances of the case, instruct Professor Smith to abstain from teaching his classes during the ensuing session, leaving the whole question of his status and position in the Free Church to the determination of the ensuing Assembly. The Commission also instruct the College Committee to make provision for the teaching of those classes during the ensuing session.”

are statements made in many particulars which are such as "are fitted, and can hardly fail, to produce upon the minds of readers the impression that Scripture does not present a reliable statement of truth, and that God is not the author of it." As I read this, the report is worded in what would be called a moderate manner; but the moderation consists not in moderation of idea, but in obscurity of expression. (Laughter and applause.)

THE REPORT SAYS TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE.

It will no doubt be said, in order to make it easier for members to adopt this motion, that the report sedulously abstains from saying that I desire to present Scripture as other than a reliable statement of truth. It will also be pointed out, probably, that the report nowhere goes so far as to say that there is any expression in my writings which is inconsistent with the supposition that Scripture is a reliable statement of truth; that it nowhere goes so far as to say that the views laid down in my statements are inconsistent with the divine authorship of the Bible; but that it says, they are "fitted to produce upon the minds of readers the impression"—not the knowledge, or the conviction—but "the impression that Scripture does not present a reliable statement of truth, and that God is not the author of it." I have no doubt that this will be represented as a moderate way of putting the case, and one which the Commission should have no hesitation in accepting, even although it could go no further. Now, the "moderation" here is not the essence of the thing. It is a thing that looks like moderation, but in reality it is only obscurity. I will explain what I mean. The statements which are criticised by this committee are statements published by one who is a member and office-bearer of this Church. According, therefore, to the ordinary laws of Christian charity, it is reasonable that any statement of his should be looked upon with the eye of charity. And, according to the law of unity in the Church, it is not desirable,—nay, it is against the law of Christ,—that any member of the Church, much less a court of the Church, should go and talk unfavourably of these writings, and about impressions which they are calculated to produce, unless they are prepared to substantiate the matter, and point out that this is, and must be, the meaning of the writings.

For, observe, there are two things, either of which if I have done, I have done a very wrong thing, a grievous wrong not only to the Church, but to the cause of truth. If, in my place as an office-bearer of this Church, I had stated that Scripture contains things which are inconsistent with its being the word of God, then, of course, I should immediately be open to discipline, for I should have broken my trust; or, on the other hand, if, without doing this, I had used insinuations directly aimed at producing an unfavourable opinion of Scripture, then also I should come under the reprobation of the Church. But if it is not contended that I have done either of these things, if it is admitted that I have at many times and in many places defended the divine authority of Scripture; that, whatever errors there may be in my views, I have always put them forward as being in the present state of things the best line of defence for the Scriptures, then in that case I maintain that it is a breach of Christian charity, and a breach far more grave than an accusation in direct terms, to go and circulate all over the Church

the impression that things are being put forth by an office-bearer of the Church, a vague impression that something is being done within the Church to undermine her doctrine. The effect can only be to produce among the people the idea either that the statements in this report are slanderous statements, or that the Church has reached such a stage of decrepitude and weakness, both intellectually and morally, that, instead of being able to meet error, and grapple with it, and seize it by the throat, she is only able to meet it by getting up a popular agitation. (Applause.)

I maintain, therefore, at the outset, that the report of this committee says either too much or too little. It says too much if my views are not inconsistent with the divinity of Scripture, and it says too little if they are.

IT BEGINS WITH GENERAL INSINUATIONS.

Now, it is very remarkable in this report that instead of beginning with details, it begins with general statements, general accusations and insinuations as to the impressions likely to be produced by these writings. There is nothing at all surprising to me in seeing such insinuations put forth against my writings. They have been put forth again and again; they have been put forth against my previous writings, for which I was tried, and for which I was acquitted—(cries of "No, no")—for which I was tried, and for which I was acquitted—(cries of "No, no," noise, and interruption)—for which I was tried, and for which I was acquitted—(cries of "Never," "Certainly not," applause, hisses, and interruption).

The MODERATOR—Allow me to suggest to you, Professor Smith, that the reiteration of that proves nothing. You have stated your own view, and with that you should be content.

Mr ROBERTSON, Arbroath—I speak to order. Is it right that Professor Smith should be interrupted while speaking from the bar?

Professor SMITH—Allow me one word. The reason why I repeated my statement was that it was met with such noise and negation that it was not possible for me to continue the further remarks which I desired to make after reiterating my statement. Therefore, in order to take up the thread of the narrative, I will once more repeat that an accusation similar to that made in the report—(renewed interruption).

The MODERATOR—Professor Smith will consult his own interest better if he does not proceed in that line. (Applause.)

Professor LINDSAY—I speak to order. (Interruption, and cries of "Chair.")

The MODERATOR—I must refuse to hear any argument that is intended to controvert my statements that Professor Smith's reiteration proves nothing, and that he would consult his own interest by passing on. (Applause.)

Professor LINDSAY—I am not going to enter on any argument. (Cries of "Chair, chair.") Is it not the province of the Moderator to protect a member at the bar? (Hisses, cheers, and interruption.)

The MODERATOR—I must refuse to hear any one who does not come and take his place on the platform. The very result which I anticipated has been produced by the departure from this rule.

Professor LINDSAY passed on to the platform amid cheers and hisses.

Mr JOSEPH WOOD moved that Professor Lindsay be not heard, and Mr KIDSTON and another gentleman at once seconded the motion. The motion was not put, but the hissing, cries of "Chair," and counter-demonstrations continuing, Professor Lindsay, after a short pause, retired to his seat amid hisses and applause.

Professor SMITH, continuing, said—Now, Moderator, with your protection, which I would like to call for, that I may be heard in what I wish to remark, I will retrace the argument with which I commenced, and in which I was interrupted. I was about to say that such remarks as are made about the general tendency of my writings are not new, and are similar to those for which I was formerly tried, and upon which I was acquitted—"No, no," and "Order"—I say "on which I was acquitted" for these reasons—because the libel formulated against me was in greater part withdrawn, and the part which was left never went on to probation; and, therefore, never went on to judgment—"Hear, hear," and applause)—and, in the judgment of every court, a man is acquitted if he is not condemned. (Applause.) Such statements were made frequently with regard to my previous writings, but they were not formerly made in so elaborate a manner as now. Previously they were made partly by speeches which never were supported by a motion or a vote in any orderly court of the Church, and partly they were maintained by pamphlets and letters to newspapers, which were largely circulated over the Church. Now, it does seem to me curious that the line of attack which was formerly used by anonymous pamphleteers to aid the agitation of the Church should now have been brought down into the committees and the Commission of the Church. I cannot but think that such a line of attack is not for the dignity or the honour of this Church, and that in being called to reply to such a line of attack, I am not treated with that fairness with which every one who has an honest and conscientious opinion to maintain ought to be treated by his Christian brethren. (Applause.)

I. THE CHARGE OF IRREVERENCE.

But perhaps the best way of disposing of these general insinuations, supposing them to have any value, is to treat them in connection with the particulars on which they are based. It is true that Dr Wilson's motion is so framed, I might say adroitly so framed, that it does not commit those who may vote for it to all the particulars. But such a general statement has no value except in so far as it can be supported in detail; if, therefore, I can succeed in showing that the details of the report are not such as they ought to be, I think it will be difficult for any man in conscience to vote for the general outcome of them. Now, the particulars are classed under four heads, and the first of these refers to passages in which the books of Scripture are said to be spoken of in an irreverent manner. I do not myself see how that bears upon what follows. A person may speak in an irreverent manner of Scripture—it is done every day—without denying that it is Scripture. (Applause.) But I should like to know where I have spoken irreverently of Scripture, because that is a charge, of which were I guilty, I should be filled with shame and confusion. I have spoken of Scripture in the language of scholarship—that is, when talking of certain classes of facts and certain things which I believed to be true, I have set these statements of

facts down in plain language. But plain language is not irreverent language. Every Scotchman, at least, knows that, for it has been characteristic of Scotchmen as a nation that, because holy things were very real and practical to them in daily life, they have been accustomed, all through their history since the Reformation, to speak of them with that plainness and bluntness with which all men are accustomed to speak of things that are real, and not simply things they are accustomed to hear in church with their hats off. (Laughter and applause.) Now, the article I am at present dealing with is an article upon the history of the Hebrew language. This Church appointed me to the chair in Aberdeen to teach the Hebrew language, and in the present state of philological research no one will pretend that it is possible to learn and teach a language thoroughly without adverting to the fact that language has a history—(hear, hear)—that the words, the idioms, the constructions used in one century are not those used in another; that the literary productions of one age have a certain type, and the literary productions of a later age another and a different type. Is it irreverent to suppose that this law holds good also of the language in which Scripture was written? (Hear, hear.) Is it to be supposed that when God chose the nation of Israel to be the mouthpiece of His revelation, when He chose from that nation a number of prophets and holy men, in order to communicate His will to the people, He so interfered with that people's ordinary way of speaking, with the idioms they were accustomed to use, with the book education they had received, with the literary capacities which He in His grace had given them by birth and education—that He so interfered with all this that there is nothing to be said of their relative literary characters, or any of those other points which occur in a literary survey?

1. THE LITERARY STYLE OF BOOKS OF THE BIBLE.

Turning to the references,—in page 599, vol. xi., of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, I have stated that “as the language decayed, the graces of the older prose style were lost. The memoirs of Ezra and Nehemiah, the colourless narrative of the Chronicles, and even the Book of Esther, are singularly destitute of literary merit.” It is, I think, generally admitted that the Hebrews, after their return from the Babylonian captivity, did not continue to speak the old Hebrew with the same purity. According to one class of writers, they had ceased to speak Hebrew altogether; it became to them merely a literary language. According to the now more current opinion, they lost their Hebrew by a gradual process; but that the language did decay and ultimately die out, is a known fact, and I maintain that, under these circumstances, it is only reasonable and natural to expect that, as the language died out, as it lost that freshness and richness which are only got by constant use in daily life, the literary style would also decay. It is undoubtedly true that God might, had He wished, have bestowed upon the author of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and upon the author of the Book of Esther, the supernatural and miraculous gift of such beautiful and splendid Hebrew diction as belongs to Isaiah; but I hold that He did not work such a miracle. It is a fact that He did not work such a miracle; and I cannot see why Dr Wilson and his committee should take it upon them to say, not that God did work such a miracle—which is

not true—but that it is irreverent in any one to say He did not. (Applause.)

2. ANONYMOUS BROADSIDES.

Now, to come to the second quotation—"There are other short prophecies of the Babylonian age, as Isaiah xiii., xiv., which seem to have been first published as anonymous broadsides—a characteristic change from the method of the former prophets, who wrote only what they had first spoken to the people." Is it, then, irreverent to say that the prophets of the Babylonian age published their prophecies as anonymous broadsides? Observe my argument. The old prophets were preachers; they lived in the midst of the nation; they were able to rise up in the market-place, or in the court of the temple, or at the door of the temple,—all of which we find in historical instances,—and there they preached the Word of God to the people by word of mouth, and then afterwards they wrote so much of these prophecies as God directed them. In the case of Jeremiah, this was not done until after many years of preaching. [Jer. xxxvi. 2.] On the other hand, when the people came to Babylon, God still sent them preachers; but how could these prophets get up in the market-place under the eyes of the Babylonian police, and there preach a sermon that Babylon was to be destroyed? We know what would have happened. Well, the prophets did then what would be done by ministers of Christ now, if the pulpits of the Church were shut against them. They did not print their sermons, of course, because they could not; but, instead of waiting till they had a large book, they put a single individual short prophecy upon parchment, upon a broadside,—that is, upon a single open sheet of parchment—and sent it through among the people, in order that in that way they might have the Word of God. That statement may be right or not, but it is not irreverent. (Applause.)

3. POPULAR LITERATURE IN ISRAEL.

The third charge of irreverence I confess myself entirely unable to understand. I am utterly unable to see that there is anything irreverent in speaking of an age of popular literature in Israel, because I have explained most distinctly how it was that the popular literature of Israel was a sacred literature. The committee have not quoted this explanation, so I will take the liberty of stating what I have said. I have said that the writings of this period, "reflecting with admirable veracity the actual life of the nation, are full of the relation between Israel and Jehovah, because that relation was constantly present to the people as a very real fact without which the history could not be told." The popular literature in Israel had two sides: there was a secular side to it which, as my article explains, God, in His providence, has not preserved to us; there was another side, namely, the plain, popular telling of a story—none the less true because popular—everyone, surely, can understand that—and this became precious to God's people, and necessary to be preserved in distinctly religious writings for later days. And why? Because it was necessary to show that God had so dealt in His miraculous love for this nation of Israel that His relations to them interpenetrated every part of the history, so that that history could not be told even in plain popular story without being full of God, the Redeemer and the King. (Applause.)

4. PROPHECY AFTER THE EXILE.

"The brief revival of spoken prophecy after the exile lacks the old fire." Is this irreverent? I ask. It is exactly what I said before;—that in literary features, not in religious worth, the style of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi was not so rich and full of fire as the style of Isaiah. It may be irreverent to say so; but every one, even Dr Wilson himself, knows that it is true.

II. GOD THE AUTHOR OF SCRIPTURE.

I next come to the second head—"Passages in which the books of Scripture are spoken of in such a way as to render it very difficult for readers to regard God as the author of them,"—difficult, not impossible, you observe.

1. THE CHRONICLER.

Here the first passage quoted runs as follows:—"The Chronicler no longer thoroughly understood the old Hebrew sources from which he worked, while for the latest part of his history he used a Jewish Aramaic document, part of which he incorporated in the Book of Ezra." Now, in order to understand this quotation, it must be remembered that in my article—which, I daresay, has not been in the hands of every member of Commission who is asked to pronounce upon it (hear, hear, and laughter)—this remark occurs in a connection which gives it a very different colour from that which it presents in this report, or in the popular and impassioned circulars by which this report was preceded. Speaking of Hebrew in that article, I say that, after the captivity, as the spoken language of only a small body of men, it gradually yielded to the spoken language of the people round about them. It obviously had to do so, and I was anxious to show, as far as I could, when and how the old Hebrew died out. Among other things, I point out that, towards the end of the Old Testament books, Hebrew seems to be written by some of the writers rather as a dead language than as a living one, just as, for example, Luther wrote many of his works, and Calvin almost all his works, in a dead language, and, without any disparagement to either, you could tell they were writing a dead language by the way they wrote Latin. Now, in the same way, it seems to me it is possible to see that the Chronicler was writing in a language of which he was not the absolute master that Isaiah was. The point to which I here allude is one which was discussed very fully under the last libel, and on which, by an overwhelming majority, I was acquitted. ("No.") The Chronicler, I have shown, for instance, seems not to have understood the expression "ships of Tarshish," and there are one or two other similar faulty expressions in the Chronicles; but these do not affect the general utility of the work, because in nearly every case, including the error as to the ships of Tarshish, you can correct it at once by looking up the older record. But, to say this, we are told, is to raise a doubt as to whether God actually spoke through the Chronicler. Very well; the Chronicler did not always understand the very words of the old Hebrew which he quoted, but there are other inspired writers who make quotations from the Old Testament, of whom the same can be said. The Apostles, for example, are accustomed

to make quotations from the Old Testament, and we know that they often used the translation of the Septuagint in cases where it had misinterpreted the Hebrew text. We are therefore entitled to say that the apostles, like the Chronicler, were not perfect Hebrew scholars ; but with this statement every one has been so long familiar that no one will venture to dispute or raise a quarrel with any person because he says the quotations in the New Testament are not always perfect translations of the Old Testament passages which they cite. (Applause.) Now, why should we not be allowed to say of the old Chronicler what is freely said about Paul ? There is no reason, except that men have got alarmed, and, being alarmed, are determined to run amuck at everything, and in so doing do not care, if only they get their way, whether they run the Church into doctrinal positions which would hold it up to be the laughing-stock of all Christendom. (Applause.)

2. SONG OF SOLOMON.

Now, as to the Song of Solomon. I was tried upon that point in connection with my old article Canticles, and I was acquitted upon it. (Murmurs of "No" from the left side of the House.) That is an interruption with which I am met whenever I state the actual fact—(laughter and applause)—and I appeal to the Moderator for protection. (A voice—"That is not the fact.") If there is to be any further dispute about that point, I will ask leave to have the records of my last trial produced and read to this court. (A laugh and applause.) But every one knows that the interruption is factious, and that it is impossible really to deny that the court acquitted me when that charge was departed from. (Applause.) Now, what I said about the Song of Solomon was that it had suffered from interpolation. That I stated before in my old article. It is rather a delicate point, but I venture to say that the acknowledgment of some passages as interpolations removes from the Book of Canticles certain passages which, I believe, have long exercised the minds and tried the faith of many modest and humble Christians. (Applause.) The existence of the interpolations is proved by the use of the versions ; and, as the point has again been raised, and as it is perhaps not presumptuous in me to suppose that some members of the Commission may not have had their attention very particularly called to the present state of the criticism of the Old Testament text, I ask your permission to make some remarks on the subject. In the seventeenth century orthodox divines were disposed to regard with great suspicion any attempt to amend the Hebrew text of the Old Testament or the Greek of the New. Since that time we have become perfectly familiar with the idea that the text of the Greek New Testament—that is, the "Received Text"—is not in many particulars the exact expression of the original sacred writings. We are familiar with the idea that the text has in several places to be corrected, and that in certain cases interpolations have to be omitted. No one expects that, when the revised English Bible comes out, it will contain every verse which is contained in the present English New Testament. No one expects that ; and no one will be alarmed at the fact, because we know very well that the present English version was a translation from a printed text, the text of the famous French printer Robert Stephen, which originated

very much by accident, and that we have means now of using better manuscripts and better copies, and getting the texts more exactly as they were written by the sacred authors. Now, that is admitted about the New Testament; and it is admitted there are two ways of making those corrections. Every critical editor of the New Testament uses partly manuscripts and partly versions, that is, early translations, which, of course, if they are handled with skill, have very much the same value as the manuscripts from which the early translator made his translation. For example, if we have a translation of the Old Testament, such as the Septuagint, which was written in great part, perhaps, two hundred years before Christ, and in part, perhaps, one hundred years before Christ, while the earliest manuscript of the Hebrew Bible now existing belongs to the tenth century after Christ, it is plain that such a version as the Septuagint carries us with a single leap over a span of twelve hundred years in the history; and that fact is of the highest value for us now. It is the original Septuagint which is to us the principal means for going over and correcting the received text of the Old Testament. This task of collation and correction is, of course, a very delicate one, and one in which people may make mistakes. It is probably a task which Dr Wilson and his friends have undertaken with more mature consideration than I have; but still I ask as my right—although Dr Wilson's study of the Septuagint may have led him to think there are not interpolations in the Canticles—to be allowed to say that my study of that version, particularly with the aid of the Syrohexaplar, which is one of our chief helps for the Septuagint, has led me to think that there are—(laughter)—and that the question is one which can be settled between us only by a kind of literary argument in which I am ready to engage with Dr Wilson or any other scholar of the Church. (Laughter.) I have stated, as quoted in the report, that the Song of Solomon was presumably not written down till a comparatively late date, and from imperfect recollection,—a statement which was practically made in the old article. And the point is simply this:—We have not got the whole Song of Solomon, and we have got something more. Something has been lost, and something has been added. But if we have got all that God thought it necessary that we should have, the character of the book is not greatly affected. There are plenty of other things which we have not got. Where are all the histories of the prophets quoted in Chronicles—have not they been lost? Where are the “Book of Jashar” and the “Book of the Wars of Jehovah?” To come down to a case which every one knows—Is it not admitted by the most orthodox scholars that the last verses of the Gospel of Mark are a fragment of some other evangelical narrative? Are they less valuable because they are a fragment? Are we not glad God has given us a fragment where He did not choose to give us the whole?

3. THE BOOK OF EZRA.

Now, to come to the third quotation under the second head, about the present shape of the Book of Ezra. This is a very complicated question, and one into the details of which I would hardly like to enter at this late hour. I wish, however, to point out that the quotation in the report stops short, so that nothing has been quoted which would

enable the Commission to put a better construction on my article than the committee desire. An attack has been made upon me for speaking of Scripture as if it were not the Word of God, but the committee has failed to quote the sentence where I begin by quoting a plain passage of Scripture as follows :—"What had actually been effected during these years for the restoration of the temple is a question of some difficulty. *It seems safest* to start from the *explicit* contemporary evidence of Hag. ii. 18 (*cf.* ii. 15 and Zech. viii. 9), which gives the ninth month of the second year of Darius—after Haggai had begun to preach—as the date when the temple was founded by Zerubbabel and Joshua" (*Enc. Brit.*, xi. 371*a*). In other words, here is a plain passage of Scripture, and here is another which is not plain; and I propose to explain the passage which is not plain by that which is. (Applause.) So far as I remember there is not a single recent writer, not even Keil, who does not hold the view that the things in Ezra iv. referred to in the passage quoted by the committee which seem at first sight to refer to the building of the temple refer only to the building of the walls. There is a little disorder in the text. There is a little transposition of some of the sources, as there often is in manuscripts. Will any one pin his faith in scripture and the divine authorship of Scripture upon the assertion that the Biblical manuscripts could not possibly have passed through some of those vicissitudes which other manuscripts have passed through—especially when God in His providence has left us in the clearest way the material with which to correct any disorder? (Applause.)

III. SCRIPTURE AN AUTHENTIC RECORD OF FACTS.

I now pass on to consider the third head of the report—"Passages which naturally suggest that Scripture does not give an authentic narrative of facts or actual occurrences;" "naturally suggest," let it be observed; Dr Wilson and the committee are afraid to trust themselves far.

1. EARLIEST LAWS AND LYRICS; THE BOOK OF JASHAR.

In the first quoted passage I have stated that "the earliest products of Hebrew authorship seem to have been lyrics and laws, which would circulate, in the first instance, from mouth to mouth, without the use of written copies." Now, I do not say the "products of Hebrew authorship" were not written, but I do say that in the state of things which subsisted in the Hebrew nation in the earliest times, and which still subsists in most primitive Asiatic nations, the main circulation would be by word of mouth, and, if time were given me, I am prepared to prove it by a hundred proofs from the historical books. In regard to the passage quoted, I observe the committee have remarked that "the *Book of Jashar* is here said to be prior to our present historical books, and yet in a succeeding sentence it is stated to be not earlier than the age of Solomon, the natural inference being that the present historical books of the Old Testament were not written till that age or afterwards." Now suppose, let us say, that in some future time all the Blue-books of the General Assemblies of the Free Church had been burned, but that we had a history of the Assembly—a history, to make the analogy exact, which had been written, not at one time, but at various dates, in which Blue-books were occasionally referred to, and

that a subsequent author should have noticed that there were early collections of Blue-books or contemporary collections of other books prior to the still extant historical narratives. Would any one consider himself entitled to argue, as the committee have taken upon them to argue, that that author held the last of the Blue-books to have been printed before the first of the histories of the Assemblies was written ? (Laughter and applause.) If gentlemen who acted on the committee had really been anxious to judge me as they would be judged, as every one wishes to be judged in the court of man and in the sight of God, they would have taken my words in their natural sense ; and their natural sense is that the Book of the Wars of Jehovah was earlier than the Book of Numbers which quotes it, and that the Book of Jashar was earlier than the Books of Joshua and Samuel which quote it. And that is true ; at least it is true unless we are to have a new miracle—a quotation from a book before it was written. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) But, I suppose the gravamen of the charge here is in the statement that the Book of Jashar was not earlier than the time of Solomon. I know a great deal has been said about the fragment of it referring to the building of the temple, which I state to have been recovered from the Septuagint of 1 Kings viii. I can only remind the House that to restore the Septuagint text depends upon certain delicate operations which require a peculiar training ; I do not, therefore, say that every one, even every one who knows some Greek, will, on looking into the Book of Kings in his copy of the Septuagint, be able to find the passage at first sight. But on careful examination and enquiry, a passage will be found, given as a quotation from the Book of Jashar, which says that Solomon, when he opened the temple, rose and said, “The Lord created the sun in the heavens, but He saith that He will dwell in thick darkness ; build a house for Me, a house of habitation, that I may dwell therein for ever.” Can any one doubt the genuineness of this fragment, doubt that it is an authentic and precious record of Solomon’s very words, for the preservation of which we should be thankful, instead of finding heresy or danger in the very mention of it ? But according to the committee it is dangerous to the reputation of the Book of Joshua, as an authentic narrative of facts, to suppose that the Book of Jashar, which it quotes, was not written till the time of Solomon. Well, the Book of Jashar was certainly not written before the death of Saul, for it is from it that the first chapter of 2d Samuel quotes David’s elegy on Saul and Jonathan. Between Joshua and the death of Saul there are some four hundred years. To the dedication of Solomon’s temple are fifty years more. Do these fifty years added to four hundred make all the difference between the interval, which still allows of authentic history and the lapse of time which makes history no longer trustworthy ?

2. THE LAWS WRITTEN BY MOSES.

I now come to the second passage cited against me under this head, in which I have said that “It may fairly be made a question whether Moses left in writing any other laws than the Commandments on the tables of stone. Even Ex. xxiv. 4 and xxxiv. 27 may in the original context have referred to the ten words alone.” Now here the whole point lies in the word “writing.” Again and again I have

recognised a large part of the Pentateuchal law as being essentially Mosaic legislation. All that I have asked is, "How much was put in writing? Moreover, I do not ask what else Moses wrote, but only what laws he wrote, how much of his legislation he put in writing. The answer to this question must be sought by examining the texts in the Pentateuch itself which refer to Moses as having written certain laws. There exists a dispute as to the scope of these texts, which I have not attempted to determine, but have endeavoured to indicate the limits within which, as it appears to me, the dispute properly turns. The question is essentially an exegetical, and not a dogmatic or even a critical one. And what I say in the passage now quoted against me is exactly what was already said in the passages from my former defences referred to in Dr Lindsay's dissent. *Additional Answer*, p. 26. "According to Ex. xxiv. 4, this book"—the book written by Moses at Sinai—"contained 'all the words of Jehovah.' This might perhaps be taken to mean only the words of xx. 12-17 spoken directly by God to the people. But it is generally held to embrace all the laws in Exod. xx.-xxiii."—*Answer to the Amended Libel*, p. 6. Moses "wrote 'the words of this law.' But how much does that imply? The answer may be found in Deut. xxvii. 8, where the command is given to write the same thing, 'all the words of this law,' upon the plastered stones on Mount Ebal. It is not reasonable to think that all the historical matter of the Pentateuch or even of the book of Deuteronomy was written upon these stones. What stood upon them was doubtless, as Calvin expresses it, only "the sum and sanctions of the law." Am I to be proscribed because I have said it is a fair question whether we shall apply to certain passages in the Pentateuch exactly the same exegesis as John Calvin applied to one of them? (Applause.) I think it a very fair thing that we should consider any suggestion made by so great a theologian as John Calvin.

But, it is alleged, my statement "appears irreconcilable with many express statements made in the Pentateuch and with the words of our Lord Himself." How can it do so? The words of our Lord could not settle any detailed question about the Pentateuch, because He never had that question before Him in any answer or word He used. (Cries of "Oh, oh," hear, hear, and applause.) Our Lord spoke distinctly and intelligibly and with infallible truth on the points that He spoke to: but I am not able to see that there is any ground in theology for holding that His words had any bearing on points He did not speak to. He did not speak to this point, and upon this point therefore it is not necessary to go further. I must say I regret that Dr Rainy, who has long been looked up to as the leader of this House, and who has to a certain extent committed himself to the line in which it is now moving, has not thought it part of his duty, as a person in responsibility, to be present in the committee and to be present to-day, because it is well-known that at the very beginning of the first accusation, when Dr Begg—who, I have no doubt, will repeat the same accusation to-day—put his whole case upon this one thing, the testimony of our Lord, Dr Rainy got up and disclaimed this view; and we have from beginning to end always found the majority of this Church refusing to be dragged into such a dangerous and, I will say, irreverent use of the words of our Lord—(applause and "oh")—that He should be called in and His holy

name degraded by being made the instrument of a theological agitation. (Applause.)

3. JOURNAL OF PHILOLOGY.

I come now to the *Journal of Philology*. I was not aware that my paper in it was to be called in question ; but so far as I have been able to follow the imperfect accounts of certain matters which transpired in public prints, I understand that the same potent voice which raised this question first in the Presbytery of Edinburgh, and which has been since followed in the matter, also raised the question in the same Presbytery about the article in the *Journal of Philology*. This member of the Edinburgh Presbytery speaking of an article published in a journal edited by the secretary of the Old Testament Revision Committee, and by an English clergyman, a professor of Cambridge, and known to be connected with the orthodox party, said that this article was not only ignorant—on which, of course, I am quite willing the speaker should have his view—but was so grossly outrageous to public decency that he could not quote it without closed doors, because it was calculated to undermine the morals of the country. That statement was made by a member of Edinburgh Presbytery, and for that statement he has not yet been called to account by his Presbytery. There were members of his Presbytery upon this committee. They brought up the *Journal of Philology*, and they have found in it one contribution to their report—the statement that there was a development of the law of forbidden degrees in marriage, as there was a development in some of the other Mosaic laws. This is exactly the point which came to the front in the old libel and which became the basis of my whole contention. I said—If you cannot admit that it is legitimate for an office-bearer in the Free Church to hold that under divine sanction there was a gradual development of the Mosaic legislation and an adaptation of it to the growth of society and changing circumstances of the nation, then I must leave the Church ; but if you admit that there may have been growth and development, then I contend I am within the Church ; and the Church decided I was to remain holding this view. Now, the repetition of one detail of that general contention is all that has been got out of the article which created such a tumult. I am entitled to refer to this as an example of the means that have been used to throw blame and discredit upon an office-bearer of this Church, and which, instead of being resisted in the Presbytery, have formed an important part of the agitation culminating in this new agitational document. (Applause and hisses.)

4. HEBREW HISTORY SINCE DAVID.

Now, we come to what I have said about writing in the time of David and others. I am found fault with for saying that between the age of David and the age of Amos and Hosea there was a flourishing historical and legal literature, embodying many remains transmitted whether orally or by writing from a much earlier date. Surely there is nothing wrong in that. If some of the gentlemen who feel so hot upon this subject would take the trouble to read through two or three of the translated Arabic histories they would understand how writing has always been gone about in the East, and how authentic history has been

secured. It is by this means. The new writer has before him the old material, and in all important matters, instead of epitomising the old material, he copies it—not the whole work, but so much as is pertinent to his purpose. In consequence of this literary method, an Eastern history written hundreds of years after the events which it records may have, in the hands of a judicious critic, the same value for all practical purposes as a contemporary narrative. Let me illustrate this by an example from profane history. The earliest extant historical and traditional collections for the life of Mohammed were written some two centuries later than the events they record. Yet in these writings older books now lost have been so conscientiously copied, and genuine reminiscences of the prophet's contemporaries have been handed down so exactly in the words of the first narrator, that many of Mohammed's sayings and doings stand before us as exactly and vividly as if we had been eye witnesses of the events. I believe it was in this way that our present historical books came together. Every impartial reader who allows the narrative to produce its own impression on his mind—and I, for one, am not inclined to supplement the history of the Bible, as I read it in the Bible, by rabbinical traditions—every such reader must observe that we have one continuous story from Genesis to the end of 2 Kings (Ruth, of course, occupying a separate place in the Hebrew Canon). The narrative, therefore, in its present form, as it came from the hand of the last editor, is not older than the exile. But its historical value is vindicated by the observation that the work is really due to a succession of writers acting upon the same method which has secured for us an authentic record of the profane history of the East. The successive writers, one coming after the other, although they might have something to add, actually quoted in their own words the older historians; and in no other possible way can so accurate and so contemporary a record for remote antiquity be obtained as that gives.

Now, of course, the question here is whether Scripture is an authentic narrative of fact. It will be observed that under this head the committee themselves have not suggested that if the narrative of facts is authentic, there is anything in this view opposed to inspiration. It has not been classed under the head of passages which deny Scripture to be the Word of God; and if, as I have shown, this view of the history, instead of taking from its authenticity, adds to its authenticity and value, he would be a bold man who would assert, on grounds of *a priori* reasoning, from the methods of Western literature, or the little prejudices of little minds who have not studied Eastern history, that the spirit of God could not have used such a means to propagate the history of His truth. Besides, the statement of the report is grossly unfair, in assuming, as it does, that I do not think there was any writer before David, when I have pointed out so expressly that the older parts of Samuel are practically contemporary with the events they record and are written in a masterly style which shows that the art of composition in prose was already thoroughly understood and therefore cannot have been a new thing in Israel.

5. THE BOOK OF RUTH.

Under this head the fifth extract states that “the freshest and best products of this period are the post-exile Psalms, the hymns of the

second temple, which occupy a large part of the Psalter, and, though generally inferior to the older lyrics in the highest poetical qualities, are often full of the charm of genuine feeling and sweet utterance, and sometimes rise to a sublime energy of devotion and faith. With the Psalms the graceful prose idyll of Ruth has a natural affinity." Now, let me ask, why should I not call Ruth a graceful prose idyll? Does any one deny that the Book of Ruth is graceful, or that it is in prose, or that, though in prose, it is instinct with poetic feeling? Ancient poetry was not accustomed to deal with fictitious events. (Hear, hear.) It was sufficiently real to try to give a poetic expression to real events; and I think that true poetry sometimes does so still. (Applause.) Is Tennyson's lyric upon the Charge of the Six Hundred not an authentic piece of history, because it is also a poem? At one time, it appears, I am blamed because I say that some parts of these ancient writings were not so rich in literary qualities as others, and, at another time, when I do call attention and pay a tribute of admiration to the literary elegancies of one of those writings, I am called to account for it. (Laughter.) Perhaps Dr Wilson will endeavour to prove that Ruth was not written in the post-exile period? It is very easy to make a large general statement and a large general accusation, as the committee have done, to cover this question, but no one can join in accusations of this sort who has really with the sweat of his brow tried to put himself face to face with the actual complicated details of Scripture. (Applause.) It is not practical study of Scripture, it is not knowledge of or regard for Scripture that makes men so ready to bring accusations of this sort, but it is a dogmatic prejudice which, if it is ever allowed in this Church to come between us and Scripture—if by it we are to be reduced to the position of nourishing our life from the expressions of the first chapter of the Confession when we ought to be nourishing it from the words of Christ's gospel and the words of Christ's prophets—then I, for my part, care not how long I remain in the Free Church. (Loud and prolonged applause.)

The MODERATOR—I must repeat—(loud cries of "Oh, oh").

THE MIDRASH.

The next point which has been challenged is my reference to the "Midrash, or sermonising treatment of the old history, which holds so large a place in later Jewish literature." Well, I have only to say that I am quite willing that any one should give me a better interpretation of that word than the only one I know, namely, what would now be called a popular pulpit lecture on Bible history. That, I believe, is a legitimate method of teaching; it once was wont to be very largely used in Scotland. (Laughter.)

JONAH.

As for the Book of Jonah,—on this point I have said nothing more than before. I have not tied myself to a theory, nor do I wish to tie myself or the Church to any theory of the Book of Jonah; but this I may say, that the theory of Jonah as a parable is a current theory. It is held by many moderate scholars, and it would be well for this Church to try and see whether there is anything dangerous in knowing that it is so. There are, as far as I am aware, two main objections taken

to the supposition that the Book of Jonah may be parabolic. In the first place, it is said that our Lord testified to Jonah as a real person by the allusion to the fact that the men of Nineveh repented at his preaching. I concede this, and I will also say that we know from other sources that Jonah was a real historical person. He is mentioned in the Book of Kings. I never said that Jonah was not a historical person, but that it is a custom in the Haggada to attach parables to historical names. I do not deny that Jonah was a prophet, and I do not deny that he went to Nineveh; but I affirm that the history of Jonah, as we have it in its details, is treated by most critics now as parabolical, and that for several reasons, of which I will only give one. By taking the Book of Jonah as a parable, we are able to understand what our Lord meant by "the sign of the prophet Jonah" in a way that the ordinary view does not enable us to do. I am not, mark you, going to make myself responsible for this; but I say that it is an argument which has force to my mind, at least to the extent of making me think that we ought not to tie ourselves down to the idea that we must not even breathe above our lips the fact that anybody takes the book of Jonah as a parable. Our Lord, in speaking of His resurrection, applied to it "the sign of the prophet Jonah." According to the ordinary interpretation, there was no pertinence in this sign beyond the simple fact of the three days and the three nights. Now, there are a great many cases in Old Testament Scripture in which the three days and three nights are spoken of, as for example in the sixth chapter of Hosea, where it is said, "After two days will He revive us; in the third day He will raise us up." But our Lord chose the instance in the Book of Jonah, which suggests the inference that He saw in "the sign of Jonah" something of special instructiveness. Those who take Jonah as a parable explain that in this way. They say: The children of Israel came back from Babylonish captivity; they came back to re-people Jerusalem, encouraged by many great and bright prophecies. They were to be lords over many nations, and they were to be avenged on their enemies. The people waited and watched, but these things did not come; and, as they read the prophets, they were very apt [as appears most clearly from the Book of Malachi] to reproach the Lord, and to say that His promise had not been fulfilled. These people, however, forgot another thing, that it was a condition, or part, of Israel's glorification that she should be a missionary nation to spread God's truth to the ends of the earth. It appears to many that the Book of Jonah was an answer in a parabolical form to these murmurers, who, while they thought nothing of their missionary duty, thought much of avenging themselves. Jonah, appointed the messenger of God, was the parable or type of the rebellious nation Israel. He was called to proclaim God's truth, but this he did not do, fleeing rather from the presence of God. Thus he was overtaken by the judgment of God, and was swallowed by the great fish. Throughout the whole of the Old Testament the figure of the leviathan or great fish is the usual figure for the world-power oppressing the Church [Isa. li. 9, xxvii. 1: Ps. lxxiv. 13, 14.] Israel was swallowed up by the world-power, and remained in misery because it had refused its missionary vocation; and the rising of Jonah on the third day was the rising of the nation to its missionary functions. Now, when did Israel,

which had not received and had not obeyed God's promises and prophecies, when did it rise to that vocation? Not the Israel of the flesh, but the Head—the ideal Israel—the Lord Jesus Christ Himself,—He it was who, having risen victorious from the grave on the third day, became Himself the Head of that missionary Church which is now fulfilling the duty laid upon the Church by the prophecies of Isaiah, and which now is going forward, as we believe, to receive the victory and the reward when that task has been accomplished. Surely in such an interpretation, whether it be right or whether it be wrong, there is nothing impious. There is much rather of a deep and instructive line of thought in it, enabling us to see precisely how the type of Jonah, and none other, occurred to our Lord as a fitting sign to foreshadow the change which would be introduced into the position of the Church after His resurrection from the dead.

6. EBER.

Now we come to the paragraph about Eber. In the passage quoted I have stated that in certain of the genealogical tables the genealogies are not to be understood in the sense which is sometimes put upon them, but that some things which the ordinary expositor has taken to be the history or genealogy of individuals are more probably a record either of the distribution of tribes or of ethnographical affinities. This, I think, at once disposes of the assertion that I have thrown "doubt on the genealogy of Abraham, and therefore on the genealogy of our Lord, and on the certainty of Divine revelation and the accuracy of Abrahamic history." I have done no such thing; and I am surprised that any one could suppose it. I have said that the words do not mean what Dr Wilson thinks they mean, and that they mean something else; am I to be said to cast doubt on the accuracy of a statement because I give it another interpretation than is given it by other persons? Certainly not. I go further; I will say that the statements are accurate, but that they would not be accurate but self-contradictory if they were not taken in the interpretation which I have put on them. Taking the tenth chapter of Genesis, we there find a statement made in the 22nd verse with regard to the children of Shem, which furnishes a good illustration of what I mean. There we read that the "children" of Shem were Elam (the ordinary Bible word for Persia), Asshur (or Assyria), Arphaxad (equivalent to Arrhapachitis [on the upper waters of the Zab]), Lud (or Lydia), and Aram (or Syria); so that it might just as well have been said in the English translation of that verse, that the children of Shem were Persia, Assyria, and so on. These are facts which no one will be mad enough to dispute. Now, regarding these genealogies, two interpretations are possible: either that the names which appear as names of countries were originally names of individuals, and that the countries afterwards took each the name of the individual who first settled there; or, upon the other view, that the author did not commit himself to any statement about individuals, and in stating that these were the children of Shem and so on, he meant simply to say that the children of Shem occupied these districts. It is not a question of the credibility of the author, but of what the author meant to convey by his writing. I feel a difficulty in going into this question, because, if I do so, I shall be compelled to seek analogies from the genealogies

of other Eastern nations. Were I to do this, I should be at the disadvantage of making statements to members who would not agree with me if I told them that the same was a practice in Arabic genealogies ; yet I must say so, and if gentlemen will not agree with me, I cannot help it. (Applause). When we have all these things before us, it becomes very difficult to hold that these were all actual men as well as places. But the conclusive point is this :—if we find the same man repeated in two or three genealogies as the son of different parents, or the father of different children, we may be pretty sure that common sense dictates that we are not to take the statements in their literal sense. Now, in Gen. x., Eber is the descendant of Arphaxad, and Aram or Syria is Arphaxad's brother, and the ancestor not of the Hebrews but of Uz and others. But in Deut. xxvi. 5, the Hebrew in his confession before the altar is directed to say that his ancestor was a nomad Aramean ; and again, in Gen. xxii. 21, Uz and Aram are both descendants of Eber through Nahor, and Uz is Aram's uncle instead of his son. If we find then that Eber, Uz, or Aram, had one father in one part of the Pentateuch, and another father in another part of the Pentateuch, we are not to suppose that an actual historical man had two fathers—(laughter)—but that the authors of Scripture, who were wise as well as inspired authors, meant something which was sense, and was consistent with the actual facts of the case. (Laughter and applause.) It comes to this, that in order to prevent me from taking a certain interpretation, members are to exclude this consideration altogether ; and because they are not familiar with Oriental habits of thought, and because, probably, they do not even know that in the Oriental languages there is but one form (the so called *nisbeh*) by which sonship and tribal connection and birth in a certain place are expressed, they will rather accept the position that there is a deliberate contradiction in terms between parts of Scripture than allow me to search for an intelligible explanation. (Applause.)

7. JEREMIAH L.

With reference to what is said in the next part of the report as to the "anonymous writer" in the book of Jeremiah, all I need do is to point out that an exact parallel to this prophecy, in the sense in which I speak of it, is to be found in the case of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Everyone now knows that the Apostle Paul did not write this epistle. ("No, no," applause, and interruption.) In the earlier manuscripts it is addressed only "to the Hebrews," and the name of Paul has been introduced into our authorised version only from a late and bad copy. I have used exactly the same criticism in the passage quoted with regard to Jeremiah. In the oldest Septuagint text the name of Jeremiah does not occur in the title of the chapter which I call anonymous, but that does not prove that the prophecy is not an inspired prophecy. I have been allowed to say that Paul did not write the Epistle to the Hebrews ; I said that in the same volume in which I said this other thing, and no one has challenged me. In taking up the position that some superscriptions and subscriptions in the Old Testament, as in the New, are not always part of the original texts, I have ventured to make an assertion which may be right or may be wrong ; but it is not

the truth of Scripture, but only a question as to what is the text of Scripture that is involved in it. (Applause.)

IV. PREDICTIVE PROPHECY.—1. ISA. XIII., XIV.

Coming, lastly, to the passages which are said to “discredit prophecy in its predictive aspect,” I really cannot go into this question at any length, for it was all gone into before. I said before that there were certain prophecies which could not be dated at the time popularly supposed, but never did I say that they were not spoken until the events predicted had taken place. They were true predictions, but I formed my opinion by the best light I could get, and not by tradition, and by that light I was constrained to say that, in the case of Isaiah xiii. and xiv., the title of the prophecy in our ordinary text has no more claim to be regarded as part of the original book and of the Word of God than the titles given to certain Psalms, which no one will say are a part of the Word of God.

2. DANIEL.

In regard to the Book of Daniel, the predictive character of which I am said to have destroyed by saying that it was “probably written as late as about 160 B.C.,” I confess that the question arising in connection with these writings is one of exceeding difficulty. Every one who has been face to face with the real difficulties of the Old Testament has been forced to look at that book, and I desire to speak of it with all caution. I have not gone further than to express my opinion that I do not think it probable that it was written down entirely before the date mentioned in the passage quoted from my article. I only say it is probable it was not written until that date; I will not go further, because the problem is involved in obscurity. The book comes before us in a very remarkable shape. It is written in two languages; up to a certain point it is Hebrew, then it suddenly goes off into Aramaic or Chaldee, and then it goes back again to Hebrew. This circumstance is calculated to suggest that there is something peculiar in the history of the book. It is as if a book came to us written partly in English and partly in Gaelic, without any visible ground for the change of language. Besides this, there are other considerations, pointing to a late date and a peculiar history which I need not set forth now. But am I wrong in saying that an opinion is probable which has now received such universal adhesion that even a spiritually-minded and conservative scholar like Delitzsch has admitted that there are parts in the book which must have been written as late as the time of the Maccabees? Such things must be taken into account. (Hear, hear.) We must face these problems, and the many arguments that are abroad must be weighed. It will not help the cause of God to shut our eyes and run blindly against the wall. (Applause.) We are to use caution, but we are also to use courage, and we can use courage if we believe that God’s Word is pure and seven times tried. (Applause.) It is said that if the Book belongs to a late date, its predictive element is destroyed. I have been accustomed to think that the things of Christ and of His kingdom,—the victory of His kingdom over Antichrist, and the resurrection of the dead, and the glorification of the saints—all of which are in Daniel—were weightier things than the history of Antiochus Epiphanes. That

seems not to be the view of those who wrote this report. I do not know how they would deal with the words of our Lord when He speaks of "the abomination of desolation" as something still in the future. It appears to me that they hold that if the Book of Daniel was written, as they make it appear, in the year 160, or, as the modern critics put it, between 169 and 167, then the whole predictive value of the book is lost, for according to them, that predictive value lies in the details which it gives of the wars of Antiochus and Ptolemy. These, however, I think, are not the parts of the text which are most valuable for the Christian Church in the way of edification. In the time of Jerome, it was a controversy between the heathens and the Christians whether the predictions in Daniel referred to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes only, or whether they applied to Christ and the victory of His Church. At that time the fathers of the Church held that the Book of Daniel was prophetic, because, like all the prophecies, it prophesied of Christ, and the opposite view was taken by the heathen philosopher Porphyry; but we now find men appointed members of a committee in the Free Church, who take the side of Porphyry, and who say that if the Book of Daniel is a book of prophecy, it is so not because it speaks of Christ, but because it speaks of events which were past one hundred and sixty years before Christ. (Applause.)

3. THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS.

The committee report in the last place, that in attributing the rise of written prophecy to the eighth century before Christ, I appear to be at variance with the plain teaching of our Lord, who says—"Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me, for he wrote of Me." Let us accept the whole traditional view. Let us satisfy Dr Wilson's heart, and say that Moses wrote the whole Pentateuch. Very well; that was at all events the Pentateuch, and the Pentateuch has always been called the law, and neither our Lord nor the Jews nor any theologian in any age, has ever called it part of the prophetic books. Our Lord always speaks of the Law and the Prophets as two distinct things. I do the same and, doing so, state the undoubted fact that the earliest of the prophetic books were written in the eighth century. I cannot better leave my defence in the hands of the Commission than by pointing out that this committee has been capable of founding a charge against me, whether from ignorance or from captiousness I am unable to say, which has no other basis than disregard of the fact that the Hebrew Bible is divided into the Law, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa. (Professor Smith, having spoken for about two hours, resumed his seat amid prolonged applause).

APPENDIX.

NO I.—REPORT OF COMMITTEE.

THE COMMITTEE have acted under the following deliverance of the Commission of the General Assembly :—

“That the Commission, having respect to the letter of Professor Smith transmitted by the Presbytery of Aberdeen, and to the representations made to them by so many Presbyteries as to the writings of Professor Smith, to which attention has been called since last General Assembly, and considering the widespread uneasiness and alarm as to the character of these writings, resolve to appoint a Committee maturely to examine them and the letter of Professor Smith, and to consider their bearing upon the accepted belief and teaching of the Church; to report their opinion and advice to an *in hunc effectum* meeting of Commission, which is hereby appointed to be held on 27th October next, at eleven o'clock, that they may be prepared to take such action in this matter as may appear requisite; and the Commission hereby cite Professor Smith to appear for his interest at this *in hunc effectum* meeting, and instruct the clerks to see that a citation is served upon him in due form.”

The writings of Professor Robertson Smith which the Committee have examined, and to which reference is made in the following Report, were :—

1. Article on “Haggai” in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. xi.
2. Article on “Hebrew Language and Literature” in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. xi.
3. Article on “Animal Worship and Animal Tribes among the Arabs and in the Old Testament,” *Journal of Philology*, vol. ix. 75-100.
4. Letter by Professor Smith to the Clerk of the Presbytery of Aberdeen.

In discharging the duties entrusted to them by the Commission of the General Assembly, the Committee deem it of the utmost importance to call attention to the fact that there are questions specially raised in the writings of Professor R. Smith, which are quite new in cases occurring in the history of the Church of Scotland. So far as the Committee are aware, in any processes for heresy, the infallible truth of Holy Scripture has been assumed, and the matter to be determined was whether the teaching of the accused individual was in harmony with the truth as exhibited in Scripture and formulated in the Confession of Faith. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments contained in the books which are specified in chapter I. section II. of the Confession of Faith, have always been regarded as the supreme standard of truth and duty, and the Confession of Faith only as subordinate to these. The first and fundamental testimony of every office bearer ordained is, that he believes the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the word of God, and the only rule of faith and manners; and Commissioners to the General Assembly are annually pledged to determine in all matters that shall come before them according to the Word of God. Regarding Holy Scripture the Confession of Faith declares that God is “the author thereof;” that it is to be received “because it is the word of God;” and that “the supreme Judge by which all controversies in religion are to be determined can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.”

But the questions raised by these writings of Professor R. Smith are questions which affect that authority of the Supreme Standard of the Church, which is asserted in and assumed throughout the Confession of Faith. The Committee do not impute to Professor R. Smith the intention of assailing the integrity and authority of Scripture in the writings they have examined, but the statements made by him in many particulars are such as are fitted, and can hardly fail, to produce upon the minds of readers, the impression that Scripture does not present a reliable statement of truth, and that God is not the author of it; and it greatly concerns the character and credit of the Free Church to make it clear, in opposition to any such impression, that she holds firmly, and will maintain, the infallible truth and authority of Scripture as the word of God.

The particulars referred to may be classed under four heads:—

I. *Passages in which the Books of Scripture are spoken of in an irreverent manner.*

(1.) “As the language decayed, the graces of the older prose style were lost. The memoirs of Ezra and Nehemiah, the colourless narrative of the Chronicles, and even the Book of Esther, are singularly destitute of literary merit.”—*Enc. Brit.*, vol. xi. p. 599b.

(2.) “There are other short prophecies of the Babylonian age, as Isa. xiii. xiv., which seem to have been first published as anonymous broadsides—a characteristic change from the method of the former prophets, who wrote only what they had first spoken to the people.”—*Enc. Brit.*, vol. xi. p. 599a.

(3.) “In this earliest period—the age of popular literature, as we may call it, modelled upon the songs and histories that circulated orally through the country—there is a remarkable preponderance of writings connected with the northern kingdom, and these include the narratives that are fullest of human interest, and the poetry richest in colour and imagination, such as the loves of Jacob and Rachel, the history of Joseph, the life of Elijah, the pictures of nature in the Canticles.”—*Enc. Brit.*, vol. xi. p. 598b.

(4.) “The brief revival of spoken prophecy after the exile lacks the old fire, and presents no notable literary feature, except the use of somewhat fantastic symbolic imagery, the prototype of the later apocalyptic literature.”—*Enc. Brit.*, vol. xi. p. 599 b.

II. *Passages in which the Books of Scripture are spoken of in such a way as to render it very difficult for readers to regard God as the author of them.*

(1.) “The Chronicler no longer thoroughly understood the old Hebrew sources from which he worked, while, for the latest part of his history, he used a Jewish Aramaic document, part of which he incorporated in the book of Ezra.”—*Enc. Brit.*, vol. xi. p. 597b.

(2.) Speaking of the Song of Solomon, he says:—“This lyric drama has suffered much from interpolation, and presumably was not written down till a comparatively late date and from imperfect recollection, so that its original shape is very much lost.”—*Enc. Brit.*, vol. xi. p. 598b.

(3.) Again he says:—“On the other hand, the Book of Ezra in its present shape, as edited and partly composed by the much later author who wrote Chronicles, conveys the impression that large gifts for the temple were offered by the leading Jews on their first return (Ezra ii. 68, 69), that the foundation of the house was laid by Joshua and Zerubbabel in the second year of the return (ch. iii.), and that the work was thereafter interrupted by the opposition of the Jews’ enemies till the reign of Darius. It appears probable, however, that the Chronicler has somewhat dislocated the order of events, especially by taking the official correspondence in ch. iv. to refer to the temple, whereas it really refers to the building of the city walls. This oversight might readily involve the antedating of the foundation ceremony described in iii. 8-13, which seems to be identical with that which Haggai speaks of, since the actors are the same, and the chief feature in the description which does not belong to the usual liturgical scenery of the Chronicler recalls Hag. ii. 3, Zech. iv. 7-10.”—*Enc. Brit.*, vol. xi. p. 371a.

III. *Passages which naturally suggest that Scripture does not give an authentic narrative of facts or actual occurrences.*

(1.) “The earliest products of Hebrew authorship seem to have been lyrics and laws, which would circulate, in the first instance, from mouth to mouth,

without the use of written copies. We have notice of early written collections of lyrics prior to our present historical books,—the *Book of the wars of Jehovah* (Num. xxi. 14), and the *Book of Jashar* (Josh. x. 2 Sam. i.). We have no clue to the age of the former book, but the lines quoted from it are evidently of great antiquity. The *Book of Jashar* is not earlier than the time of Solomon, for a fragment of it referring to the building of the temple has been recovered from the Septuagint of 1 Kings viii.”—*Enc. Brit.*, vol. xi. p. 598a.

The *Book of Jashar* is here said to be prior to our present historical books, and yet in a succeeding sentence it is stated to be not earlier than the age of Solomon, the natural inference being that the present historical books of the Old Testament were not written till that age, or afterwards.

(2.) Again:—“It may fairly be made a question whether Moses left in writing any other laws than the Commandments on the tables of stone. Even Ex. xxiv. 4, and xxxiv. 27, may in the original context have referred to the ten words alone.”—*Enc. Brit.*, vol. xi. p. 598 a. This statement appears irreconcilable with many express statements made in the Pentateuch, and with the words of our Lord himself.

(3.) Again:—“The laws of incest, as given in Lev. xviii. xx., belong to a part of the Levitical legislation which presents considerable difficulties to critics; but, at any rate, they are probably later than the code of Deuteronomy, where the only prohibition of the kind is directed against marriage with one’s father’s wife, xxiii. 1.”—*Journal of Philology*, vol. ix. No. 17, p. 94.

(4.) Again it is said:—“A scribe was attached to the royal court from the reign of David downwards; and the older parts of the book of Samuel, which must have been written not long after the time of that king (*see* DAVID), are framed in a masterly style, which shows that the art of composition in prose was already thoroughly understood. So, too, the best written and most brilliant part of the narrative of the Pentateuch, the combined history of the Jehovist and the non-Levitical Elohist, appears to be unquestionably earlier than the rise of prophetic literature in the eighth century B.C. In this narrative—itself the product of more than one writer—are included several collections of old laws, so that we have between the time of David and the age of Amos and Hosea a flourishing historical and legal literature, in which, and in lyric collections like the *Book of Jashar*, were embodied many poems, legends, and other remains, transmitted, whether orally or by writing, from a much earlier date.”—*Enc. Brit.*, vol. xi. p. 598b.

This is held out as a proof that we have between the age of David and the age of Amos and Hosea a flourishing “historical and legal literature,” a view which evidently suggests that the narrative was not written till after the time of David, and that other parts of the Pentateuch must be ascribed to an age subsequent to Hosea.

(5.) “The freshest and best products of this period are the post-exile Psalms, the hymns of the second temple, which occupy a large part of the Psalter, and, though generally inferior to the older lyrics in the highest poetical qualities, are often full of the charm of genuine feeling and sweet utterance, and sometimes rise to a sublime energy of devotion and faith. With these Psalms the graceful prose idyll of Ruth has a natural affinity. The other writings of the last age are, on the whole, much inferior.”

“The *Midrash*, or sermonising treatment of the old history, which holds so large a place in later Jewish literature, had come in before the time of the Chronicler, who quotes a work of the kind by name—the *Midrash of the Book of Kings* (2 Chron. xxiv. 27, cf. xiii. 22). Along with this came the beginnings of Haggada, the formation of parables and tales attached to historical names, of which the Book of Jonah is generally taken as an early example, and which attains much greater dimensions in the apocryphal additions to the Hagiographa.”—*Enc. Brit.*, vol. xi. p. 599b.

(6.) “Again, according to Gen. xi. (and Gen. x. 24), Eber is the great-grandson of Shem through Arphaxad, and ancestor of Terah through Peleg, Reu, Serug, and Nabor. These are not to be taken as the names of individual men.

“When it is recognised that Eber in Genesis is not an actual personage, but an ethnological or geographical abstraction, we are thrown back on etymological conjecture as to the origin of the name of Hebrews.

“*Note 1.*—The Terahites, according to other testimonies, are Aramæans (Gen. xxii. 20, *seq.*; Deut. xxvi. 5), but our Elohist, who can hardly have

written before the Captivity, makes Aram a separate offshoot of Shem, having nothing to do with Eber (Gen. x. 22, 23).”—*Enc. Brit.*, vol. xi, p. 595a.

He here says, “These are not to be taken as the names of individual men;” and further on he asserts that “Eber in Genesis is not an actual personage, but an ethnological or geographical abstraction,” thus throwing doubt on the genealogy of Abraham, and therefore on the genealogy of our Lord, and on the certainty of Divine revelation, and the accuracy of the Abrahamic history. Besides, he makes Gen. x. 22, 23, the work of a man “who can hardly have written before the Captivity.”

(7.) “Jer. l. 1, contains these words:—“The word that the Lord spake against Babylon and against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet,” and this prophecy (continued without interruption in ch. li.) closes with a full account of the date of its composition by Jeremiah, and the instructions which he gave to Seraiah concerning it (ch. li. 59-64). But Professor Smith, quoting from this prophecy, ascribes it to an “anonymous writer.”

IV. *Passages which discredit prophecy in its predictive aspect.*

(1.) Parts of the Book of Isaiah, xiii. xiv., in which are found predictions of events long subsequent, are represented as not having been composed till the Babylonian age, and published as anonymous broadsides.

“There are other short prophecies of the Babylonian age, as Isa. xiii. xiv., which seem to have been first published as anonymous broadsides—a characteristic change from the method of the former prophets, who wrote only what they had first spoken to the people.”—*Enc. Brit.*, vol. xi, p. 599 a.

(2.) The Book of Daniel, along with some Psalms, is said to have been probably written as late as the national revival under the Maccabees, about 160 B.C., a statement which tends largely to destroy its predictive character.

“It is even probable that the Old Testament Canon contains elements as late as the epoch of national revival under the Maccabees (Daniel, certain Psalms), for Hebrew was the language of religion as well as of scholarship.”—*Enc. Brit.*, vol. xi, p. 599 b.

(3.) “A new epoch begins with the rise of written prophecy in the eighth century.”—*Enc. Brit.*, vol. xi, p. 599 b. In thus attributing the rise of written prophecy to the eighth century B.C., he appears to be at variance with the plain teaching of our Lord, who says (John v. 46), “Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me.”

The particulars here adduced are not meant to be exhaustive. They are presented as specimens of the manner in which Professor R. Smith handles the books of Scripture. The whole tendency of the writings examined by the Committee is fitted to throw the Old Testament history into confusion, and at least to weaken, if not to destroy, the very foundation on which New Testament doctrine is built.

Moreover, the general method on which he proceeds conveys the impression that the Bible may be accounted for by the same laws which have determined the growth of any other literature, inasmuch as there is no adequate recognition of the Divine element in the production of the Book.

The Committee accordingly recommend the Commission to take steps for making it evident that the Free Church cannot sanction the kind of teaching animadverted upon in this Report, which these writings would justify, and for urging the General Assembly to declare to her people and to other Churches that she cannot sanction the ideas suggested by it.

Letter of Professor R. Smith.

In considering the terms of this letter it is necessary to advert to the position of Professor R. Smith when the writings now under consideration were prepared for publication, and to the judgment of last General Assembly on his case.

The writings now under consideration were not in the view of last General Assembly, although it could not have been difficult to make the Assembly aware of the tenor of them previous to their pronouncing judgment on Professor Smith's case. It is well known that in the *Daily Review*, published

on the day preceding said judgment, there were copious extracts from an article by Professor Smith on the Epistle to the Hebrews, which appears in the same volume of the *Encyclopædia* subsequent to the article on Hebrew language and literature. But apart from this, the latter article was prepared for publication, and finally revised at a time when the author had accepted service of a libel containing a charge of holding and promulgating dangerous views on a cognate subject to those contained in this article. This course of conduct seems to require explanation as to how it can be reconciled with the ordinary principles of Church order and discipline.

In reference to the judgment of last General Assembly in his case Professor Smith says :—"Since I wrote the article on Hebrew Language and Literature the Assembly has given a final decision on the question whether the critical views for which I was libelled are inconsistent with office in the Free Church. The Church declines to make these views matters of discipline, and leaves the ultimate decision as to what truth they contain to future inquiry in the spirit of patience, humility, and brotherly charity. This decision enabled myself, and those who hold like views, to remain at our posts with a clear conscience, and to return to work in the Church with fresh vigour."

The Committee are of opinion that such a representation of what was expressed and implied in the judgment of last General Assembly is altogether untenable. The General Assembly neither did nor could determine a general principle as to what views were consistent with the tenure of office in the Free Church. Their judgment in the case was a judicial act with reference to the case before them, in which the relevancy of the libel inferring discipline in connection with Professor Smith's views on Deuteronomy had been affirmed by three successive General Assemblies, and could not be reversed. In pronouncing judgment, the Assembly limited the finding to admonition, while they restored Professor Smith to his Chair in the circumstances which had then emerged. The Assembly did not propose to lay down any general rule regarding the application of discipline to critical views. No single Assembly could do so. Such a course would only be competent after an overture to Presbyteries, and the approval of such overture by a majority of them.

Professor Lindsay dissented from the constitution of the sub-committee appointed to prepare a draft of Report.

Professor Lindsay dissented from the resolution of the Committee to consider the preamble before considering citations from Professor R. Smith's writings.

Professor Lindsay dissented from the rejection of his motion that Professor R. Smith should be invited to confer with the Committee.

Mr Cowan dissented from the Report for reasons which he read, and to this dissent Mr Bell adhered.

Mr M'Crie dissented from the Report for reasons which he read, and to this dissent Mr Bell adhered.

Professor Lindsay dissented from the Report for reasons which he read, and to this dissent Mr Bell adhered.

The Committee having resolved not to print the reasons of the several dissentients, Mr M'Phail dissented from this resolution, and to this dissent Professor Lindsay adhered.

No. II.

REASONS OF DISSENT FROM REPORT OF COMMITTEE.

I BEG to dissent, in my own name and for those who may agree with me, from the Report of the Committee which charges Professor Smith's writings with speaking of the books of Scripture in an irreverent manner, with speaking of the books of Scripture in such a way as to render it very difficult, if not impossible, for readers to regard God as the author of them, with naturally suggesting that Scripture does not give an authentic narrative of facts, and with discrediting prophecy in its predictive aspect :—

1. Because in judging of the writings of Professor Smith the Committee have wilfully set aside the ordinary methods of interpretation, and have deduced from these writings views which the author would never have admitted to be in them. In any case of disputed interpretation, surely the ordinary mode of getting at the true meaning is either to ask the author to explain his meaning personally, or, failing this, to compare the statement under consideration with other statements made by him, and thus give it the meaning most consistent with the whole known opinions of the author. The Committee have always refused either to appeal to Professor Smith personally, or to take into consideration other statements of his, on the ground alleged over and over again, that the Committee had nothing to do with Professor Smith's own opinions or beliefs, but only with what they called the "natural" meaning of the isolated sentences discussed. But if the ordinary methods of interpretation be set aside, the "natural" meaning can only be the meaning which the Committee, without warrant, read into sentences they cite.

2. Because the opinions quoted to be condemned have in almost every case been already adjudicated upon by the Church, either by the final decision of the General Assemblies of 1878 and 1880, or by the decisions of the Synod and Presbytery of Aberdeen, which decisions, when the appeals against them were fallen from, became final.

3. Because in all cases the opinions quoted do not, when fairly interpreted, bear out the charges of irreverence and disparagement of Scripture founded upon them.

And, in particular, I dissent from the use of the citations to prove the charges, because—

1. It is surely not irreverent to say that when the Hebrew language ceased to be a vernacular, its style became impoverished, and the graces of the older prose were lost. There is no irreverence in saying that the literary style of some parts of the Bible is better than that of other parts. Paul himself says, "I came not with excellency of speech," 1 Cor. ii. 1; and describes himself as "rude in speech," 1 Cor. ii. 6.

2. It is surely not irreverent to say that during the Babylonish Captivity, the prophets, who had not opportunities for preaching, seem to have begun to circulate short individual prophecies in writing, and without appending their names; whereas the earlier prophets, after a long course of preaching, collected the sum of their teaching in writing. But this is all that is meant by speaking of prophecies as "anonymous broadsides;" broadside being a short book as opposed to a long one, and anonymous because not appearing with the author's name, Hab. ii. 2.

3. The sentence quoted refers exclusively to the literary features of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, and is so limited by the context. The remark is a remark upon style, and only amounts to this, that the literary style of these prophets is not so good as that of earlier prophets, and surely such a statement is quite within the limits of the most reverent criticism.

4. The statement about the Chronicler came up under the old libel in the third particular, and was decided in Professor Smith's favour by the Assembly of 1878. All that Professor Smith says is that the Chronicler, who spoke Aramaic, was not a perfect Hebrew scholar. A Jewish Aramaic document means a document written not in Hebrew but in Jewish Aramaic; and the whole reference is made in an argument to prove that that language had already begun to supersede Hebrew.

5. The statement quoted about the Song of Solomon is only asserted by Professor Smith to be a probability. It is a probable conjecture brought forward to account for some difficulties.

(a.) It is very difficult to trace the connection between the several parts of the book as it now stands.

(b.) The book evidently belongs to the age of Solomon, and yet it contains Greek and Persian words and phrases.

(c.) The existence of interpolations is proved from the ancient versions.

From these considerations the result comes that *probably* the Song of Solomon, as we now have it in the Old Testament Canon, is not so much a complete book as a collection of precious fragments. This, surely, is no denial of the Divine authorship of the book as we now have it. The question of theological importance is not whether we possess the original Canticles complete, but whether we have as much as Divine Providence judged necessary. Besides,

every statement about the Song of Solomon in article "Hebrew Language and Literature" had been already made in article "Canticles," which has already been judged by the Church under the old libel.

6. The oversight is charged to the *editor* of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles, and what is said is that he so copied from the original sources, that the error *corrects itself*. It is not held by any one that Scripture is so constructed that everything in it is clear and free from occasion of misapprehension without study and comparison of passages. All that is said is that the editor has made an oversight in copying, but that we need not be led astray by this, for other parts of the book enable us to correct the slight error. A statement like this does not deny the Divine authorship of these books.

7. Professor Smith does not say that all lyrical collections were prior to all the historical books, but only to those in which they are found quoted, and this seems plain fact and not heresy. The only statement made is that the Book of Jashar and the Book of the Wars are prior to the books that quote them. Jashar is quoted in Joshua, but it contained a poem by David (2 Sam. i. 18), and Professor Smith, founding on the Septuagint, says it also contained a fragment referring to the building of the Temple. How can it be said that the difference of age between David and Solomon is just the difference between regarding Joshua as contemporary history or bad history?

8. The statement made about Moses's writings has been very much misinterpreted.

(a.) The whole statement is made concerning the laws and not the historical narrative. Professor Smith makes no statement denying that the greater portion of the narrative of the Pentateuch may be from the pen of Moses.

(b.) The question is strictly limited by the context to mean, not how many laws Moses gave, but how much he wrote, and how much he left to be handed down in the first instance orally. Professor Smith proves from Scripture that there was an oral transmission and communication of law down to the time of David and the prophets. The only thing that remains is to ask how much, according to the testimony of Scripture itself, one can certainly affirm to have been left by Moses in writing.

(c.) Professor Smith does not say that Moses left no written laws but the Ten Commandments; he only says that it is a fair question whether he left more. Now, on this head he says precisely what he said in his "Additional Answer," p. 26, and in his "Answer to the Amended Libel," p. 6, specially referred to in the decision of last General Assembly.

There is therefore no new matter in Professor Smith's remarks on this topic, and indeed nothing which was not specially adjudicated upon by last General Assembly.

9. The statement about the laws of incest quoted from the *Journal of Philology* amounts only to this: that a study of Scripture itself suggests the idea that this law was at a late period inserted into the previously existing Levitical Code. Now, the Church has already admitted, under the old libel, the possibility of successive redactions of the Mosaic Law, and the introduction from time to time of new laws, under the direction of divinely inspired prophets, when the circumstances of the people required them.

10. I dissent from the statements made about Professor Smith's historical criticism, and also from the paragraph on p. 8 of the printed Report describing Professor Smith's method, and beginning, "Moreover the general method, . . ." for these reasons.

The whole inquiry concerns the present literary state of the historical books of the Old Testament. It is granted by most commentators, that the historical books did not attain their present state in which we have them till the time of the Captivity, and that Ezra used the hand of an editor. The question remains, How did the literature, and especially the historical literature, grow to be what it is?

(a.) Professor Smith nowhere admits the merely natural growth of this literature, and nowhere denies that the genesis of the literature was divinely guided to produce an inspired record; on the contrary, he has again and again asserted this.

- (b.) He distinctly states in the article under consideration that the later authors or editors incorporated *en masse* the earlier prose, which "reflects with admirable veracity the life of the nation, and is full of the relation between Israel and Jehovah, because that relation was constantly present as a very real fact, without which the history could not be told."

Professor Smith does not attempt to say when written history began. No one makes it begin as early as Adam, and yet we believe we have authentic history without its being contemporary. Oral tradition must have preceded written history, and that tradition need not have been inaccurate because it was oral, when we remember that in the East the disciple is taught to hand down what is told him *in the very words of the narrator*. Professor Smith says, that up to the time of David there are parts, but only parts, of the narrative which bear the marks of oral transmission. It is not denied that there was a large amount of written narrative, and it is expressly said that prose narrative was not in its infancy in the time of David. Thus it is not said there was no prose writing before David's time. What is said is that after him and before the eighth century was the bloom-time of prose literature.

11. Professor Smith now, as in the previous article "Bible," does no more than say that the view that Jonah is a parable is one which is largely adopted; and this is a simple fact. No evidence has been produced to show that he personally holds and is committed to that view. Least of all can it be said that he is pledged to maintain it, even if it can be shown to be dangerous to faith. Besides, Professor Smith's statements about Jonah formed part of the old libel, and were included under the fourth particular, on which he was acquitted in Presbytery and Synod, while the appeal to the Assembly was fallen from.

Professor Smith nowhere impugns the historical accuracy of the Book of Ruth, and if he places it here, as in the article "Bible," among the later canonical books, he simply follows the Hebrew Canon, which classes it, not among the earlier books, but in the Kettubim. This also was adjudicated upon under the fourth particular in the old libel.

12. The question of importance to faith in connection with these genealogies is that our Lord is a descendant of David, Abraham, and Adam, and these genealogies trace the steps, but the descent is as true if it should be proved that, as Dr Fairbairn held, many of the names in the list were names not of persons but of class-families, *i.e.* of ethnological abstractions, or, as seemed most likely to the late Professor Weir, were names of places which the families inhabited, *i.e.* geographical abstractions. The genealogy remains, and the descent is as clearly stated. Professor Smith does not commit himself to one particular opinion, as Dr Fairbairn and Dr Weir have done; he suggests both alternatives.

13. In the Septuagint version of Jeremiah I. 1, the words "by Jeremiah" are not found, and Professor Smith probably accepts that reading, which does not name Jeremiah as the author.

14. Professor Smith does not commit himself to the Maccabean date of Daniel, he merely suggests that that may be probable; even if he had gone further he would be doing no more than has been done by that devout commentator Delitzsch, who, in the interest of prophecy, and not to disparage it, makes the date of Daniel in its present form about 168 B.C.

15. Professor Smith, in speaking of the rise of written prophecy in the eighth century, is clearly speaking of the prophetic books in the sense in which the term was used by the Jews, and has since been used by most scholars and commentators. The Pentateuch is never spoken of as a prophetic book, for in the Old Testament Canon it is classed apart from them. It is the *torah* as distinguished from *nebiim*.

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